



SCHOOL CITY OF HOBART

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<http://www.hobart.k12.in.us>

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

**Please partner with us to stop Cyberbullying! Stop Online Social Aggression!
Cyberbullies use the Internet or cell phones to send hurtful messages or post information to damage the reputation and friendships of others.**

Please visit our web site (www.hobart.k12.in.us) for helpful guidelines to prevent your child from being victimized by or engaging in online harmful behavior. It is located on the front page of our web site under Announcements. If you are unable to visit the web site, we would be happy to mail you a copy of the entire guidelines or contact your school for a copy. A one page summary is located on the back side of this letter. In addition, please visit www.isafe.org to register for an account to gain access to the parent portal. Online training, prevention measures and tips are offered.

SIMPLE EXPECTATIONS FROM YOUR CHILD:

- Don't make threats online.
- Report threats or distressing material.

ACTIONS and OPTIONS:

- Calmly and strongly tell the cyberbully to stop and to remove any harmful material.
- Ignore the cyberbully by leaving the online environment, blocking communications, or both.
- File a complaint with the Internet provider, cell phone company and web site provider.
- Send the cyberbully's parents a letter that includes the evidence of cyberbullying.
- Demand that the actions stop and harmful material be removed.
- Contact an attorney to send a letter or file a lawsuit against the cyberbully's parents.
- Contact the police if the cyberbullying involves threats of violence, coercion, intimidation based on hate or bias, or any form of sexual exploitation.
- Do not hesitate to contact our Brickie Safety Tip Hotline (942-TIPS) or administrators at the school for assistance.

PREVENT YOUR CHILD FROM BEING A CYBERBULLY:

- Talk with your child about the value of treating others with kindness and your expectation that your child act in accord with this value online.
- Make it clear that if your child engages in irresponsible online behavior, you will restrict Internet access, activate monitoring software, and review all online activity. Talk about the implications of cyberbullying that could lead to criminal arrest or civil litigation. Also, discuss the point that if your child misuses email or a cell phone that is on a family account, the entire account may be terminated.

Our children must value others and use their digital citizenship responsibly. In addition, their online activity is a digital footprint of the type of person they are. It may be the very thing that prevents a college or an employer from accepting or hiring them. We must help our youth understand the consequences of harmful online behavior. Please partner with us!

Sincerely,

Peggy Buffington, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

The School City of Hobart does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital status, genetic information, or disability, including limited English proficiency.

CyberbullyNOT

Stopping Online Social Aggression

Cyberbullies use the Internet or cell phones to send hurtful messages or post information to damage the reputation and friendships of others.

Types of Cyberbullying

- Flaming. Angry, rude arguments.
- Harassment. Repeatedly sending offensive messages.
- Denigration. "Dissing" someone online by spreading rumors or posting false information.
- Outing and trickery. Disseminating intimate private information or tricking someone into disclosing private information, which is then disseminated.
- Impersonation. Pretending to be someone else and posting material to damage that person's reputation.
- Exclusion. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- Cyberstalking. Creating fear by sending offensive messages and engaging in threatening activity.

How, Who, and Why

Cyberbullying may occur via personal Web sites, blogs, e-mail, discussion groups, message boards, chat, instant messaging, or voice, text, or image cell phones.

A cyberbully may be a person whom the target knows or an online stranger. A cyberbully may be anonymous and enlist the aid of others, including online "friends."

Cyberbullying may be a continuation of, or in retaliation for, in-school bullying. It may be related to fights about relationships or be based on hate or bias. Some teens think cyberbullying is a fun game.

Teens might think...

- They think they are invisible, so they think they can't be punished.
- No real harm has been caused online
- They should have a free speech right to post whatever they want, regardless of the harm caused.

The Harm

Cyberbullying can cause great emotional harm. The communications can be vicious and occur 24/7. Damaging material can be widely disseminated and impossible to fully remove. Teens are reluctant to tell adults for fear they will be restricted from online activities or the cyberbully will retaliate. Cyberbullying can lead to youth suicide and violence.

Responsible Management of Internet Use

- Keep the computer in a public place and supervise.
- Find out what public online sites and communities your child uses and review what your child is posting. Emphasize that these are public places!

Prevent Your Child from Being a Cyberbully

- Make it clear that all Internet use must be in accord with family values of kindness and respect for others.
- If your child is being bullied at school, work with the school to stop the bullying and make sure your child knows not to retaliate online.
- If you know your child has cyberbullied others, be very proactive in preventing any continuation. You can be held financially liable for the harm your child causes to another.

Prevent Your Child from Becoming a Target

- Make sure your child knows not to post information that could be used maliciously.
- Visit your child's online communities and discuss the values demonstrated by those who participate.
- Bully-proof your child by reinforcing your child's individual strengths and fostering healthy friendships.

Warning Signs

- Sadness or anger during or after Internet use.
- Withdrawal from friends and activities, school avoidance, decline of grades, and depression.
- Indications that your child is being bullied at school.

Action Steps and Options

- Make sure your child knows not to retaliate, to save the evidence, and to ask for your help if he or she is having difficulties.
- Identify the cyberbully or bully group. Ask your Internet service provider for help.
- There are different ways that your child or you can respond to cyberbullying:
 - Calmly and strongly tell the cyberbully to stop and to remove any harmful material.
 - Ignore the cyberbully by leaving the online environment, blocking communications, or both.
 - File a complaint with the Internet or cell phone company.
 - Send the cyberbully's parents a letter that includes the evidence of cyberbullying. Demand that the actions stop and harmful material be removed
 - Seek assistance from the school.
 - Contact an attorney to send a letter or file a lawsuit against the cyberbully's parents.
 - Contact the police if the cyberbullying involves threats of violence, coercion, intimidation based on hate or bias, or any form of sexual exploitation.